



**FEMA**

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# Disaster News

## **FEMA: Two Weeks to Apply for Disaster Unemployment Assistance**

Those who lost work because of January's crop freeze only have two more weeks to apply for Disaster Unemployment Assistance, state and federal officials announced today.

The deadline to apply is April 13, 2007.

"It's not just workers who lost jobs in the fields," said Justo Hernandez, federal coordinating officer for the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). "This is for anyone who lost income as a direct result of the freeze. For instance, people laid off at the packing houses or food processing plants."

Hernandez pointed out that many people may not realize they are eligible for help, such as self-employed persons, who are generally not eligible for the regular unemployment insurance program.

"Disaster Unemployment Assistance (DUA) offers a financial lifeline to workers who lost their jobs because of the freeze and who are not now receiving unemployment benefits," said Patrick Henning, director of the California Employment Development Department (EDD) which administers the Unemployment Insurance program in California. "We encourage all of these workers to apply for DUA. Many workers, including those who already qualified for unemployment but have now exhausted those benefits, may find that they are eligible for more weeks of assistance."

Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger asked for federal help with the freeze recovery and on March 13, 2007, President Bush declared a major disaster for 12 California counties that provides both DUA and also food commodities to be distributed in the affected communities.

The counties, all in central and southern California, are Fresno, Imperial, Kern, Los Angeles, Monterey, Riverside, San Bernardino, San Diego, San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara, Tulare and Ventura.

During the past 10 days, bilingual teams of FEMA community relations specialists have visited all the declared counties and met with state and local officials, workers, charitable agencies and others involved in the recovery to assess the needs.

FEMA funds the DUA program, which is being administered by the U.S. Department of Labor and the California EDD. The DUA program pays up to \$450 a week, for up to 26 weeks. The food commodities are provided by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The commodities are distributed to food banks in the declared counties through California's Emergency Food Assistance Program, operated by the California Department of Social Services.

Applications for DUA must be made through the EDD. That can be done by calling **1-800-300-5616**, the Spanish phone line at **1-800-326-8937** or TTY number **1-800-815-9387**; visiting the local One-Stop Assistance Centers in each county, or going online at [www.edd.ca.gov](http://www.edd.ca.gov). Applicants must have a legal right or permission to work in California.

Emergency food supplies are available to anyone suffering hardships from the freeze in the disaster counties, through local food distribution points in communities throughout each county.

*FEMA manages federal response and recovery efforts following any national incident, initiates mitigation activities and manages the National Flood Insurance Program. FEMA works closely with state and local emergency managers, law enforcement personnel, firefighters and other first responders. FEMA became part of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security on March 1, 2003.*

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